

The Tree Commission Meeting for the City of New Castle took place on March 5, 2012 at 5:30 p.m. in the City of New Castle's Town Hall.

Members Present: John Lloyd, Chairperson
 Chip Patterson
 Erv Thatcher
 Tom Truman
 Nancy Coning
 Susan Keyser

Members Absent: Fran Peden
 Mark Miller

Mr. Lloyd convened the meeting at 5:35 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Approval of Minutes – A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the 2/6/12 meeting.

Old Business

At the last meeting there was a question about the sidewalk at 46 E. 3rd Street. Less than 1" of impervious material was put down which should not be a problem. The homeowners chose not to put in steel plates and the roots were not cut.

65 West 4th Street – Ms. Coning restated that pruning is needed on every tree on this street. A homeowner has done some pruning and if the Tree Commission doesn't handle pruning more homeowners will do trimming work. Mr. Lloyd reminded of a provision in the ordinance that prohibits cutting on City trees unless approval is granted from this body.

Pruning and Removal Requests

Mr. Lloyd reviewed the pruning and removal list. Also reviewed were five (5) bids for pruning of 24 trees and removal of 26 trees.

Delmarva Power -- Cuts on trees are not what standards recommend but they have tried hard to do what we asked them to do.

31-39 East 4th Street – Mr. Truman believes the girdled Zelcova tree should be removed. There is little canopy on the tree. Mr. Truman moved that the girdled Zelcova tree at 31-39 East 4th Street be removed. Ms. Coning seconded the motion which was approved.

44 West 4th Street – A Kwanson cherry tree is showing decay and is leaning towards the street. Ms. Keyser will look at the tree.

300 Harmony Street – The silver maple tree is nasty but there is no reason to remove it. Mr. Thatcher said it is causing water in the homeowner's basement. The homeowner contacted Mr. Lloyd requesting the tree be removed. Ms. Keyser feels the homeowner should follow normal procedure and appear before the Tree Commission or put their request in writing to this body. The discussion that followed included getting a certified arborist to write an opinion to be presented to the Tree Commission before action is taken and budgetary concerns.

Mr. Thatcher made a motion to remove the tree. The motion was withdrawn for lack of a second. Mr. Truman said there are other issues with the subject tree. Ms. Keyser reiterated her concern that this body is moving away from procedures we have followed in the past. Mr. Lloyd agreed.

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West 8th and A Alley (Dobbinsville) -- A tulip tree looks like lightening has struck it. It is on City property and is considered to be hazardous.

700 Clark Street & West 7th Street – Pin oak trees are starting to grow without interfering with utility lines. Two (2) pin oaks on 6th Street are very close to 7th Street. No remediation on the tree.

West 3rd Street by Sailing Club – Ms. Keyser has looked at the area and questioned five (5) trees needing branch levels raised. She suggested trimming two (2) limbs now and be selective with monies for the remaining limbs.

Ms. Keyser moved to prune two (2) trees on 3rd Street near the sailing club boat house. Ms. Coning seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Penn Street (near Progressive Club) – The fire department uses this street to access the boat ramp when 3rd Street is blocked and low-hanging limbs threaten the fire boat.

Mr. Lloyd asked Commissioners to look at the rest of the trees on the pruning and removal lists and provide an opinion on them.

New Business

100 West 3rd Street – The homeowner (Joe Day) appeared before the Commission requesting removal of two (2) trees (chestnut tree & a hemlock evergreen). He is seeking direction and wonders who is responsible for the trees. Discussion followed as to whether the trees are street trees or on private property. One of the trees is dead. A survey done in 2010 indicates both trees are street trees. It is Mr. Patterson's belief the trees are in the public right of way and subject to protection under the ordinance. The condition of the trees was questioned and he is curious if the construction project at this location has negatively impacted the trees. Mr. Patterson expressed concern with City residents' lack of knowledge concerning the Tree Commission or rules surrounding trees. Mr. Lloyd asked commissioners to look at the trees.

Chairman's Report

There was brief discussion about adding members to the Tree Commission. An update was provided on Messrs. Peden and Miller.

Budget Report -- Mr. Lloyd reviewed the FY12 budget to date and commented that City Council passed the tree ordinance (ordinance) to handle trees in the City. Council needs to provide a budget to work within. (*Lengthy discussion about budgetary matters followed.*) Mr. Thatcher noted the trees planted last fall will need to be trimmed. Mr. Patterson stated that homeowners' problems with trees will continue to need attention. The "removal" budget is higher than it once was and this body has a responsibility to address tree issues in the City. Not handling tree problems in some cases could result in hazardous situations that must be addressed.

Dewey Park – A weeping cherry tree needs pruning. Ms. Keyser cautioned about altering the look of the tree.

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Bartlett Tree Experts – Bartlett is recommending elm tree treatment in the spring. Mr. Lloyd suggested applying to the Trustees for funding assistance; elm trees are high value trees. Ms. Keyser wondered if Russ Carlson would guide us on what treatments are recommended before approaching the Trustees.

Urban Forestry Manual – No action to be taken at this time. The Commission will keep an eye on the matter.

Tree Inventory Software – Mr. Patterson provided a history. URS did a survey using a mapping system. MSC bought software for mapping the electric and water system, but someone needs to download the URS database into it and then update it. There is a tree inventory program that will track trees. Someone needs to be trained in updating the database. A meeting needs to take place with Minner and Minner about what the Tree Commission wants to do and the cost will be based on the Commission's needs. Mr. Patterson said all the information was given to the State (Henry Poole) and they were going to put the information into a database.

Grants – There are two (2) grants that Mr. Lloyd wants to submit applications for. Both are through the State Forestry Service; one is for planting and the other for maintenance.

Members Reports

Ms. Keyser – Fall Planting -- The Delaware Center for Horticulture is applying for a grant for 65 trees. A total of 45 trees is requested for Dobbinsville. It was suggested by Mr. Lloyd that the Trustees be consulted to make sure they know the number of trees and the areas in Dobbinsville and Battery Park where plantings are planned. Soil quality is a problem in Buttonwood and prepping an area for a few trees was mentioned. We were unable to get four (4) crab apple trees for Station Park last year but can now plant them. Mr. Lloyd will mark the area and Mr. Thatcher will secure approval for planting. Ms. Coning questioned how we will manage maintaining the trees when we are experiencing problems with existing trees.

Ms. Coning – The tree in front of her house is starting to open up; she is concerned with disease. Mr. Lloyd will look at the tree.

Adjournment

There being no more business to address, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie

Debbie Turner
Stenographer